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Chapman
Report 11
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DCI/IC 74-1671

1 July 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Strategic Programs

SUBJECT : General Keegan's Letter re Backfire

1. I have just received a copy of General Keegan's letter regarding the findings of the interagency group which has been trying to resolve the differences between the FTD study of the Backfire and the McDonnell-Douglas analysis of that aircraft. General Graham has asked that I supply you with my comments on the matter.

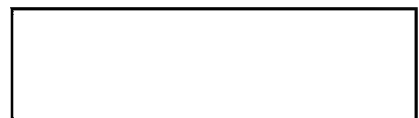
2. Although I have not seen the finished product, I have been told that the agreed radius of action for the aircraft flying subsonically, and with its wings fully extended throughout the flight, is 3050 n.m.--essentially the same as that of the Bison heavy bomber. General Keegan makes much of this point in asserting that, "Although the aircraft is capable of performing peripheral missions, it is just as capable of performing an intercontinental mission."

3. Several factors argue against such a view:

a. There is as yet no force of tankers to support a Backfire force, but there is a force of tankers to support the Bison bomber force.

b. The aircraft clearly was designed to perform under a variety of conditions including high speed (Mach 2) dash at high altitude and subsonic penetration of defenses at very low altitudes. Any mission requiring either or both of these conditions certainly could not have a radius of action of 3050 n.m.

c. None of the flights we have been able to get data on show any significant distances flown in the subsonic, wings fully extended mode.



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4. General Keegan also takes a swipe at the study because it addresses the likely usage of the aircraft. That, however, is the key issue. Ever since the aircraft was first seen, it has been the view of the majority of the community agencies that it was probably intended primarily for use against peripheral targets, whatever its true radius of action. I think it is quite to the point that some statement regarding the intended mission be made and the fact that it is made after agreement has been reached on the performance is quite encouraging.

5. General Keegan thinks it regrettable that the conclusions of the study are based on staff assessment and opinions rather than on technical analysis. Assessments and opinions of experienced and qualified analysts are the guts of the intelligence game. A technical appraisal is a tool that the analysts use in making their assessments or forming their opinions. May it always be thus.

6. Finally, I would add that my opinion expressed in my analysis of KIQ 5a is still my opinion, i.e., that the agreed estimate of the aircraft's performance is wrong.

7. I am aware that you are preparing a response to General Keegan for the DCI's signature. Ray DeBruler read me a draft he had prepared and it made all the appropriate points. I am merely offering my comments for whatever worth they may be.



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